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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4095
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8270
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOXO
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR IS

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Major media reported that on Sunday Israel decreased fuel supplies to the Gaza Strip in line with the sanctions approved last week by Defense Minister Ehud Barak. The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that Attorney General Menachem Mazuz plans to meet today

with Barak to review the legal basis for the decision. Israel Radio reported that on Sunday the High Court of Justice rejected a petition by human rights organizations to prevent cuts in the supply of electricity and fuel to Gaza. However, the court will ask the state to provide an explanation for the cuts within five days. Leading media reported that Israel continues to allow money into the Gaza Strip from the West Bank. Ha'aretz quoted Israeli security forces as saying that the money was intended for salaries PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas has committed to paying.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post quoted senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office as saying that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to issue invitations for Annapolis next week. On Sunday Maariv reported that Israeli officials told the newspaper that Olmert and FM Tzipi Livni had persuaded Abbas to drop demands that core issues be discussed at the Annapolis conference. Maariv quoted an unnamed "senior diplomatic official" as saying: QThe Palestinians understand that Annapolis was originally conceived of as a meeting to promote the process and they have climbed off of the high limb of turning Annapolis into a summit for the final status arrangement and peace.Q The Israeli source added that the parties agreed that all progress toward Palestinian statehood would have to be contingent upon the completion of the first stage of the road map.

On Sunday Maariv reported that security establishment officials are warning that "the money for building the separation fence has run out and construction will cease within several days.Q The statement was made in the wake of the Finance Ministry's announcement that it is not certain that the half-billion shekels (around USD 125.25 million) that were taken from the projectQs budget in order to purchase weaponry will be restored.

Israel Radio reported that an IDF soldier was moderately wounded in the Nablus refugee camp of Ein Beit Ilma.

The Jerusalem Post quoted UN officials as saying on Sunday that Egypt has returned 48 refugees to Sudan. Israel deported them to Egypt two months ago.

The Jerusalem Post reported that for the first time, Yad Vashem will inaugurate on Sunday an exhibition on Muslims who saved Jews during the Holocaust.

Leading media reported that the cabinet might move its weekly sessions from Sundays to Tuesdays.

Major media reported that in the closest that Israel has come to confirming the air raid last month on Syria, PM Ehud Olmert told the cabinet Sunday that Turkish airspace might have been violated during the operation. Olmert offered an ambiguous apology to Turkey, which has complained of an airspace violation. "If Israeli planes indeed penetrated Turkish airspace, then it was without prior intent or any intent to infringe upon or undermine Turkish sovereignty, which we respect," a statement from Olmert's office cited him as telling the cabinet. The statement said that in a conversation with Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan last week, Olmert "expressed Israel's apologies to the Turkish government and the Turkish people for any harm that might have been caused." On Sunday Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), criticized on CNN the US and Israel for failing to provide the UN watchdog with intelligence about Syria's purported nuclear program. On Sunday Yediot reported that a knowledgeable American source told the newspaper that the American intelligence community ordered the satellite photographs of the Syrian nuclear reactor that was attacked, photographs that were taken by the Digital Globe company approximately a month before the strike. Yediot said that the order was intended to allow the media to publish "incriminating" photographs of the Syrian compound after the attack.

Over the weekend all media quoted Raleb Majadele, Minister of Sports, Culture and Science, as saying on Friday in an interview with Israel Radio that Israel is willing to give up the Golan Heights in exchange for comprehensive peace. GOI spokespersons denied his comments.

Israel Radio cited criticism by GOI officials of ElBaradei's statement that there is no evidence that Iran is developing nuclear

weapons. The radio quoted an Israeli official as saying that the IAEA has no inspectors in Iran. Ha'aretz reported that Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman has set up 12 working groups in cooperation with the defense establishment to deal with different aspects of the crisis over Iran's nuclear program. Their conclusions and recommendations are expected to be included in a document Lieberman will present to the cabinet later this year. Ha'aretz reported that Lieberman's meetings with officials in the defense establishment in recent months surrounding the Iranian nuclear issue have resulted in a certain degree of dissatisfaction in Defense Ministry circles. The media reported that on Saturday FM Tzipi Livni left for China, where she will lobby for sanctions against Iran.

Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday the head of the Palestinian negotiating team for the Annapolis meeting, Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala), warned of the "dangerous implications" of a failure during the gathering. Speaking to the governing body of the Meretz party in Tel Aviv, he also said the success of negotiations depended on setting out a timetable for a diplomatic process. He added that the PA was not weak, and that its forces could be deployed in Nablus within weeks. Ha'aretz quoted Reuters as saying that on Sunday the PA sent envoys to Damascus to urge Syria not to hold a gathering of Hamas members and others opposed to the expected Annapolis meeting.

On Sunday Ha'aretz quoted author Amos Oz as saying in his acceptance speech for the 2007 Prince of Asturias award for Letters in Oviedo, Spain, that he does not trust Israel's current political leadership and that it does not have to reach an agreement with the Palestinians.

On Sunday Maariv reported that Defense Ministry and Air Force representatives participated in the testing of the Lockheed Martin-manufactured THAAD anti-ballistic missile, which was carried out last Friday in Hawaii. Security officials have assessed that there has been progress in the negotiations for the purchase of the system by Israel, even though this could call into question the further development of the Arrow 3 system.

Leading media reported that former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and CNN founder Ted Turner arrived in Israel on Sunday for a visit of the country and Jordan.

Palestinian academic Sari Nusseibeh was quoted as saying on Sunday in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that the Palestinians would be prepared to forgo the right of return for millions of refugees in return for a full Israel withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, including East Jerusalem and the Old City.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that on Sunday Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman presented PM Ehud Olmert with new demands: A final-status agreement with the Palestinians should be based on a territorial exchange and mutual recognition of the need for two separate states. The document demands that Olmert insist on a "complete end" to all Palestinian activities. Lieberman suggested that NATO forces could be deployed in the territories.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post reported that the PA intends to fire 30,000 members of the West Bank security forces.

Major media reported that on Sunday Larissa Trimbovler, wife of Yigal Amir, the jailed assassin of Yitzhak Rabin, gave birth to a boy in Jerusalem. The brit milah (Jewish circumcision ceremony) will take place next week, apparently on November 4, the civil-calendar anniversary of Rabin's murder.

Maariv quoted the German weekly Focus as saying on Sunday that the three arrested Muslims who had planned to attack US institutions in Germany on September 11, also intended to blow up the Israeli Embassy in Berlin.

Yediot reported that on Sunday the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee endorsed a law proposal aimed at barring persons who have made unauthorized trips to enemy countries from presenting their candidacy to the Knesset. Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann supports the bill, while Attorney General Menachem Mazuz is opposed to it.

Ha'aretz reported that a ministerial committee on Greek Patriarchate affairs is recommending that the GOI recognize Theofilos III as head of the Greek Orthodox Church in the country. The decision, spurred by American pressure and the personal involvement of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, is supposed to put an end to a convoluted affair in the course of which various parties in Israel tried to condition the patriarch's appointment on his selling real estate properties to Jews.

Ha'aretz reported that Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko is expected to ask Israel to recognize the genocide of the Ukrainian people by the Soviet regime when he visits in a couple weeks. Israel is not expected to accede to the request, which has won the support of Jewish community leaders in Ukraine, so as not to damage its relationship with Vladimir Putin's government.

Ha'aretz reported that FM Tzipi Livni will sign a tourism agreement with China today.

All media reported that the Israel Police's national fraud squad unit has for over two years been conducting a criminal investigation of Gilad Sharon, son of former PM Ariel Sharon, on suspicion that he served as a conduit for transferring to his father USD 1.8 million from businessman Arie Genger. On Sunday Ha'aretz said that the charge was included in a lawsuit brought last week in a New York court by Genger's ex-wife Dalia Genger.

Major media reported that on Sunday the Histadrut Labor Federation threatened to start a general strike if the secondary school teachers' strike was not resolved.

Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "[Ehud Barak's] latest decision, to cut off the power to Gaza, is an excellent example of the difference between being wise and being a wiseacre.... It is an idiotic decision."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Those who berate Israel for alleged collective punishment are apparently not incensed by the rocketing and routine terrorization of ordinary Israelis."

Very liberal columnist Gideon Levy wrote in Ha'aretz: "Do not belittle the Annapolis summit.... For the first time, it will become crystal-clear who aspires toward peace and, more important, who flees from it as if from fire. Israel is going to Annapolis as if by force."

Former ambassador to the US Itamar Rabinovich wrote in Ha'aretz: "The day after the elections will see an increase in the efforts to convince the new president, whoever he or she may be, that there is no better way to shake off Bush's legacy than by bringing about a far-reaching change in the Middle East policy of the United States."

Block Quotes:

II. "Let There be Darkness"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (10/29): "Something is happening to Ehud Barak in his second term. He is so wise in his own eyes, so mature and worthy and better than anyone else, that being wise is no longer enough for him. Now he is a wiseacre. His latest decision, to cut off the power to Gaza, is an excellent example of the difference between being wise and being a wiseacre.... It is an idiotic decision.... Firstly, it punishes not the Qassam rocket cells but the Gazan population, and pushes into the arms of Hamas and terrorism. Secondly, it is opposed to all

norms of morals and international law. Instead of severing Israel from the occupation, at least as far as Gaza is concerned, it exacerbates Israel's image as a cruel occupier. Thirdly, it does not conform to the effort to reestablish a dialogue with the Palestinian Authority and with the moderate Arab regimes. The foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan or Saudi Arabia will not be able to sit quietly in Annapolis while Barak is plunging Gaza into darkness, not to mention Abu Mazen.... But why complain about Barak?

We have a prime minister who is willing to accept this folly silently, just to keep from rocking the boat. We have a foreign minister who is supposed to warn of the diplomatic damage, but she too is silent. We have a president who is supposed to represent the moral aspect of our life, but he too is silent. There are members in the Labor Party's Knesset faction who will not keep still on any issue, but have nothing to say on this topic."

II. "No Security, No Power"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (10/28): "On Thursday, Defense Minister Ehud Barak gave the go-ahead to gradually reduce the provision of Israeli power and other supplies to Gaza.... Yes the government bent over backwards to stress that none of the above should be regarded as retaliatory, lest Israel be accused of collective punishment.... Scandalously ... those who berate Israel for alleged collective punishment are apparently not incensed by the rocketing and routine terrorization of ordinary Israelis.... Hence little purpose is served by hiding behind 'continuing disengagement' terminology. Equivocations and euphemisms imply admission of guilt. Israel should not undercut its own case with superfluous apologetics. It is much more effective to tell it like it is and clearly affirm that this country's rights to self-defense are not less legitimate or inferior to others'."

III. "The Importance of a Failed Summit"

Very liberal columnist Gideon Levy wrote in Ha'aretz (10/29): "Do not belittle the Annapolis summit.... For the first time, it will become crystal-clear who aspires toward peace and, more important, who flees from it as if from fire. Israel is going to Annapolis as if by force. The Prime Minister's hands are tied. If he were to dare to raise the core issues, which are the only thing to be discussed there, then his political fate would be sealed.... Israel never had as few excuses for evading progress toward peace, the ambient climate was never more conducive to progress. The terror card cannot be played again, because the terror has abated.... There is more. The security issue is much greater today on the Palestinian side. Israel can no longer continue to mouth slogans about security, after seven years in which it killed 4,267 Palestinians, 861 of them children and teens, in comparison to 467 Israelis who were killed, according to data from [the Israeli human rights organization] B'Tselem. Another excuse that no longer washes is the 'no partner' one. Israel has never had an easier peace partner than Mahmoud Abbas.... The real role of the US will also be exposed at the summit: No other agent is as capable of making as great a contribution to advancing peace in the region as is Washington, but in the absence of any pressure on Israel ... Annapolis is shaping up as no more than a perfunctory gesture from America. We tried, the Americans will say.... All the cards will be shown at Annapolis, and that is no small thing. The world will see and judge, Israelis will see and decide: Do we genuinely want peace?"

IV. "What Will Happen After Busha[]"

Former ambassador to the US Itamar Rabinovich wrote in Ha'aretz (10/29): "In its latest issue, dated November 8, The New York Review of Books published in a prominent -- if not screaming -- manner a letter signed by eight famous individuals ... warning ... of the grave dangers inherent in a possible failure of the Annapolis conference.... The authors see the Annapolis conference as a 'genuine opportunity for progress toward a two-state solution'.... The chances that the 'letter of the eight' will influence the Bush administration's policy are small.... The importance of this letter must be sought in two other contexts. The first is the effort to shape the American agenda on the 'day after' the presidential elections.... The day after the elections will see an increase in the efforts to convince the new president, whoever he or she may be, that there is no better way to shake off Bush's legacy than by

bringing about a far-reaching change in the Middle East policy of the United States. Another context is the continuing erosion of Israel's standing in the United States. This does not manifest itself in public opinion polls and in votes in Congress, but rather in the loss of the 'moral horizon.'"

JONES